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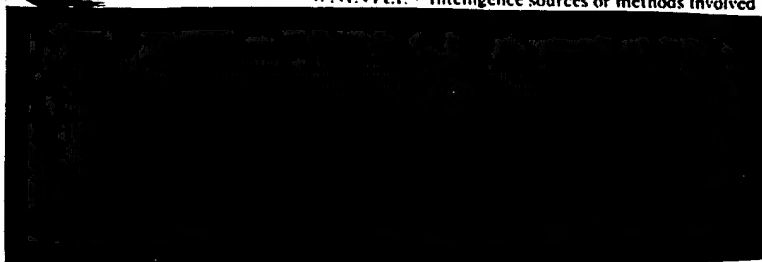
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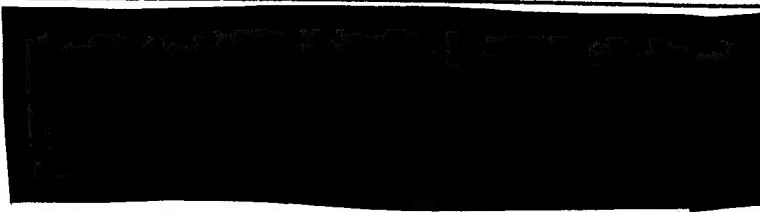
Supplement

16 June 1989

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Lebanon: Sunni Opposition to the Syrian Presence

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Sunni resistance to the Syrian military presence in Lebanon is manifested in physical attacks by militant Lebanese Sunni fundamentalist groups. Other factions active in Lebanon, including the main Christian militia and the PLO, are using the Sunnis to advance their own political designs. b3



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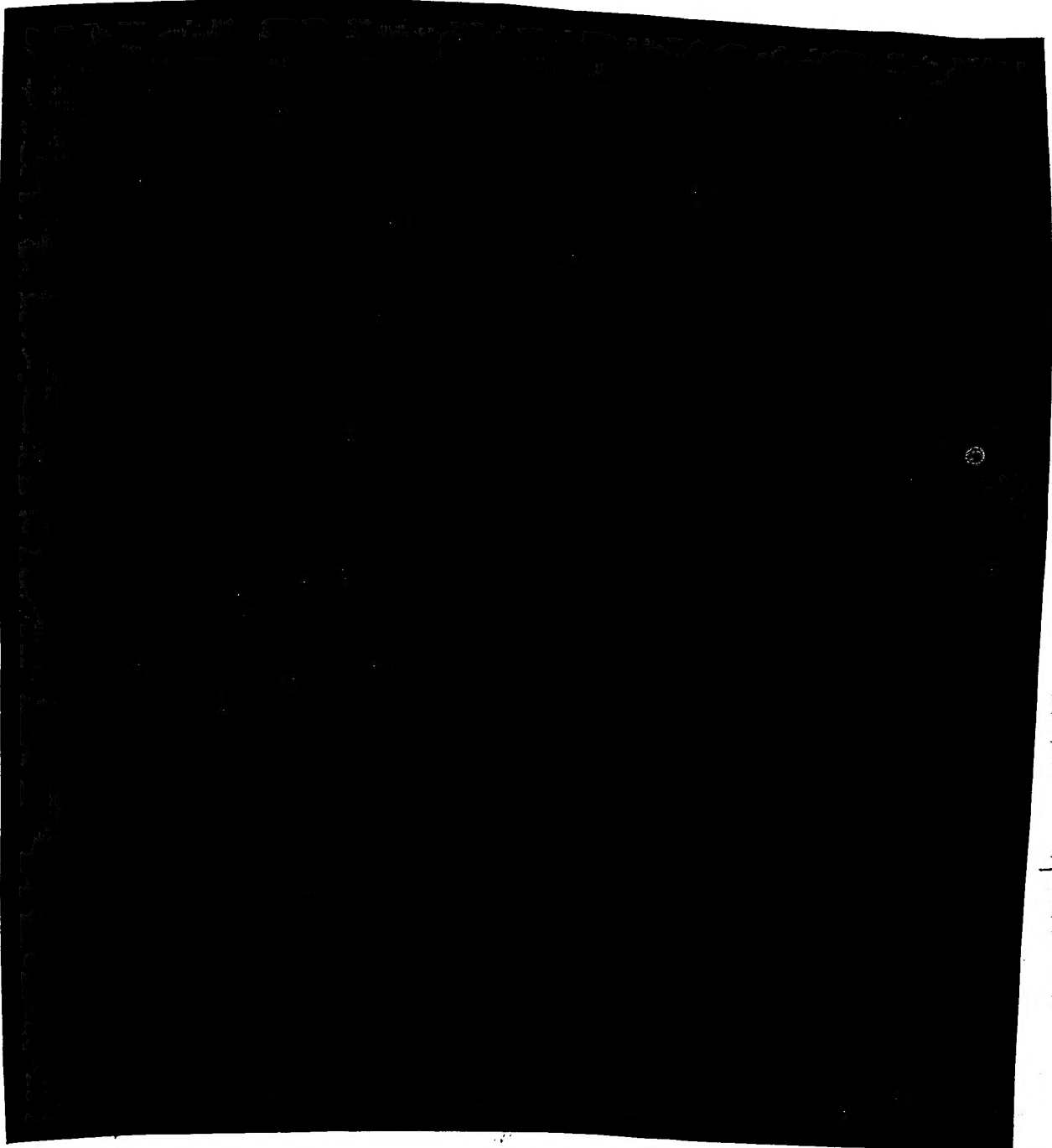
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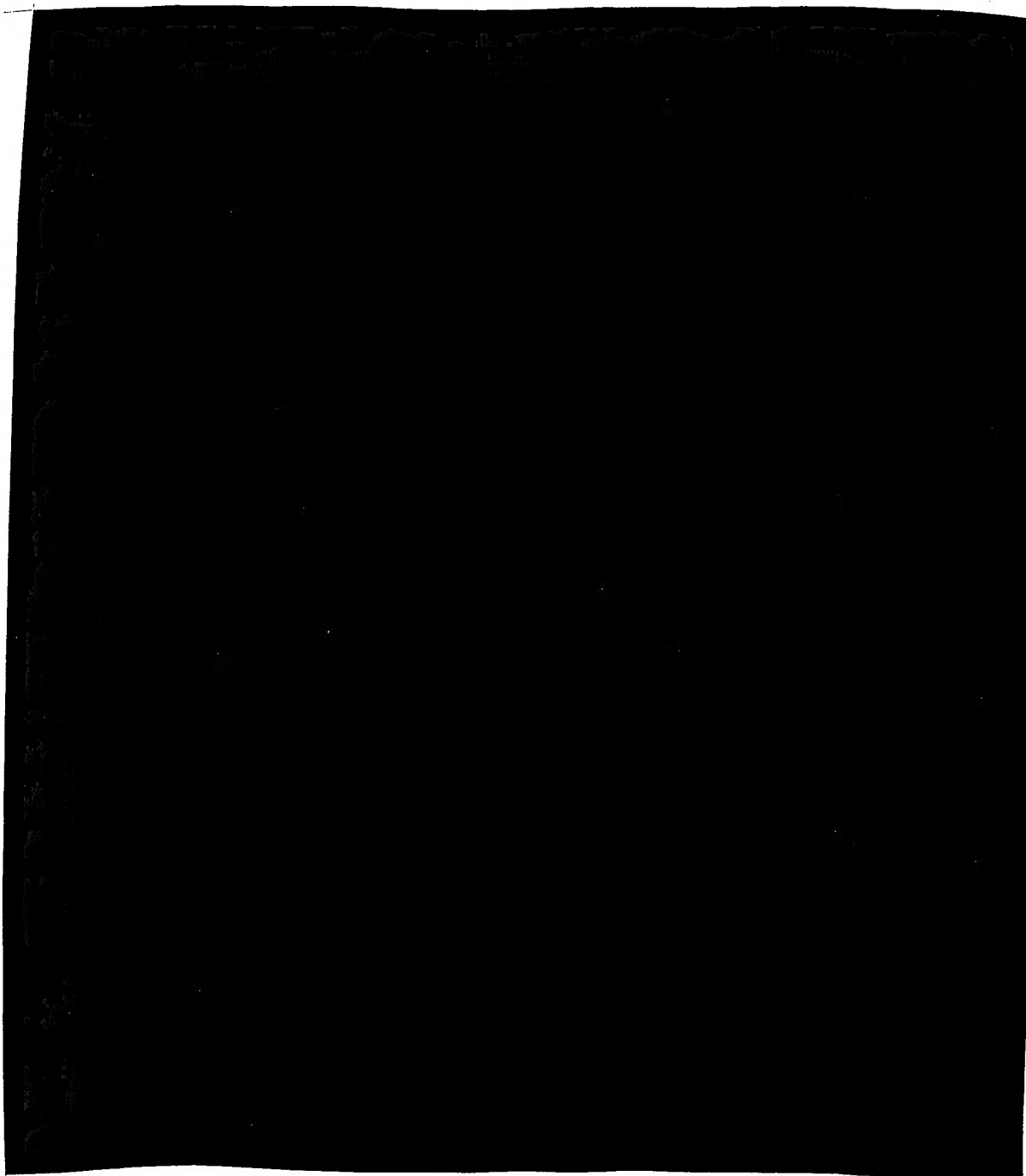
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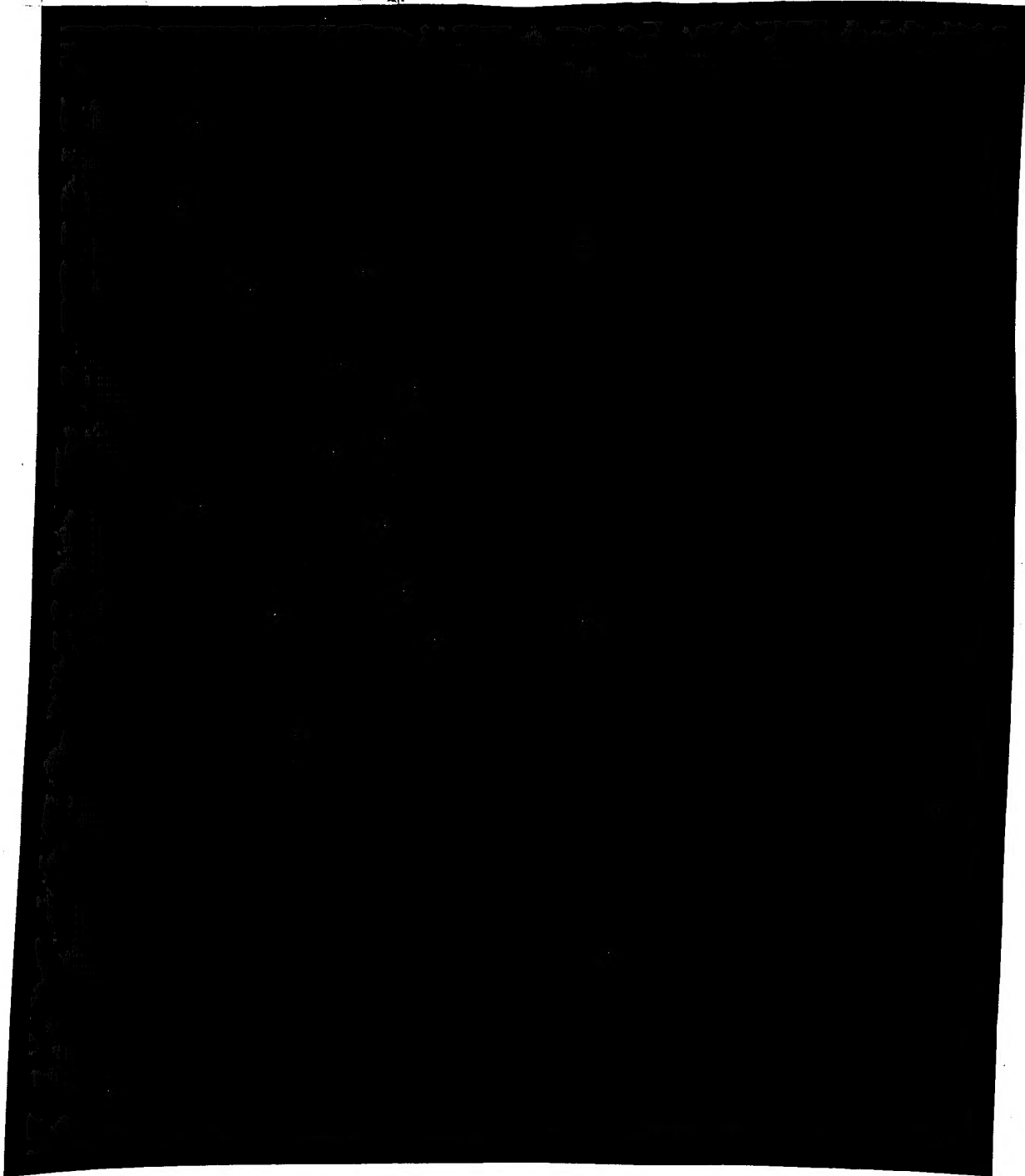
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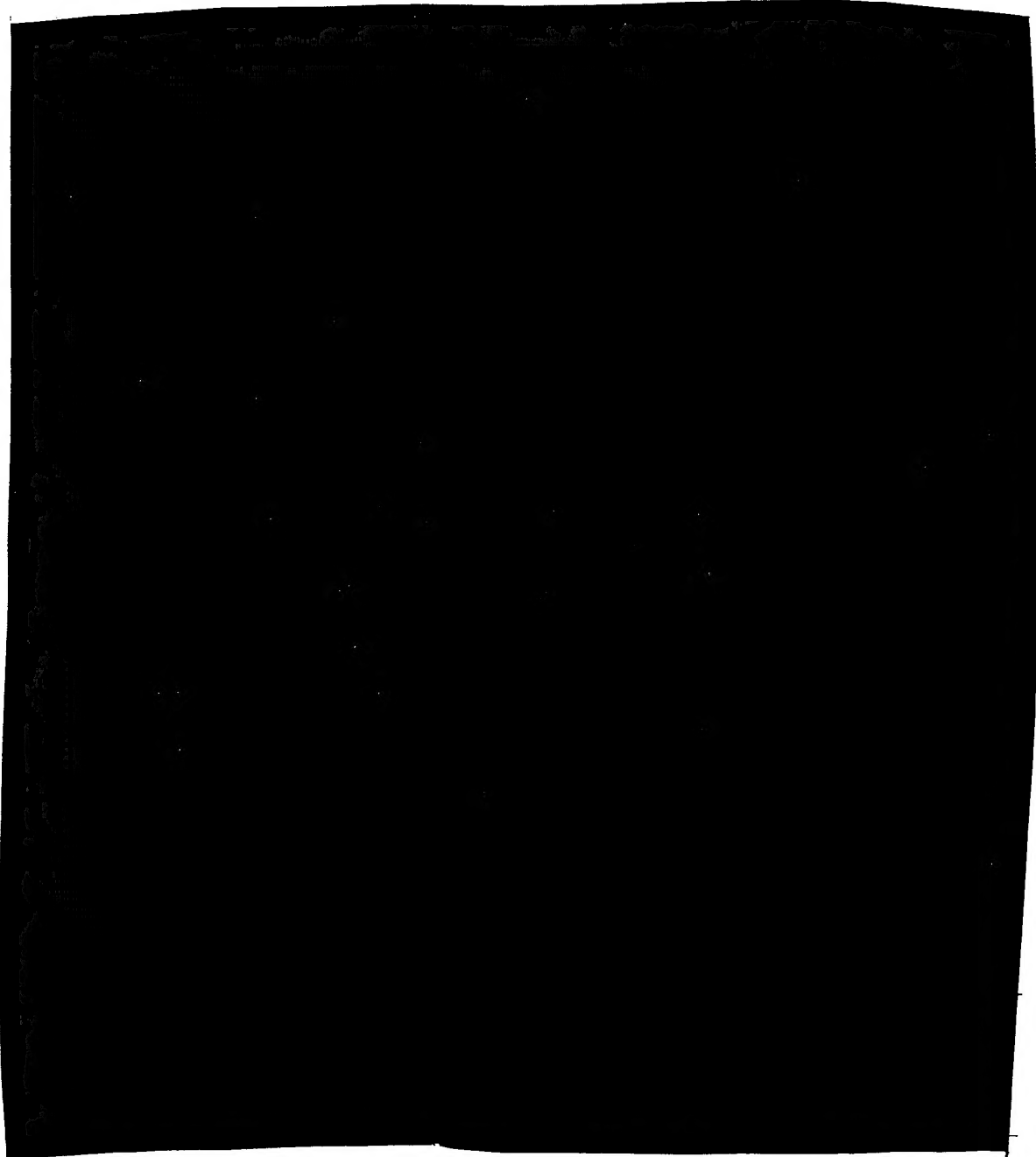
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## Lebanon: Sunni Opposition to the Syrian Presence

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Anti-Syrian attacks by Sunni fundamentalists in Lebanon are the most recent manifestation of Sunni resistance to the Syrian military presence in the country. The groups behind the anti-Syrian campaign are remnants of the militant wing of the Sunni fundamentalist Islamic Unification Movement, which was centered in northern Lebanon in the mid-1980s. In recent months the groups have publicly claimed steadily rising hit-and-run attacks against Syrian forces in West Beirut and northern Lebanon. b3

The Sunni attacks are motivated largely by a desire for revenge against Damascus for its harsh suppression of the Islamic Unification Movement in the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli in 1986. The Sunnis probably hope to reinvigorate their fundamentalist organization as an actor in the Lebanese political arena. Ironically, efforts by the Sunnis to regain a measure of autonomy have made them increasingly dependent on other actors on the Lebanese stage. Their attacks are largely sponsored and sanctioned by groups that are using the Sunnis as a tool to advance their own political designs. The Christian Lebanese Forces militia and pro-Arafat Palestinians have been the primary supporters of the militant Sunnis, who also maintain ties to Hizballah—the extremist Shia group—and the Popular Nasirite Organization militia. (S) b3

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### The Sunni Community Under Fire

Lebanon's Sunnis comprise a quarter of the population but are among the country's weakest political groups, in our judgment. They are dispersed geographically, politically fragmented, and no longer have an independent militia able to protect their interests. The Beirut-based Mārabitun, the Sunni militia responsible for many attacks against Syrian forces in the early 1980s, was crushed by the Syrians in April 1985. The only remaining Sunni militia, the Sidon-based Popular Nasirite Organization, is outwardly aligned with Damascus. (S) b3

Lebanon's Sunni community has been a special target of Syrian repression in recent years. We believe Syrian President Assad fears Lebanese Sunni political activism could spill over to Syria, where Sunnis make up nearly 75 percent of the population and threaten the stability of his minority Alawite regime. Opposition to the Assad regime by Syrian Sunnis prompted outbreaks of anti-Alawite violence in the late 1970s and early 1980s that culminated in a short-lived but bloody uprising in Hamah in 1982. Although Assad's harsh suppression of fundamentalist organizations has eliminated effective opposition to his regime, the Syrian President probably believes his country's Sunni community remains a potential threat to Alawite preeminence. Lebanese Sunni contacts with the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria reinforced Assad's concerns, in our judgment. (S) b3

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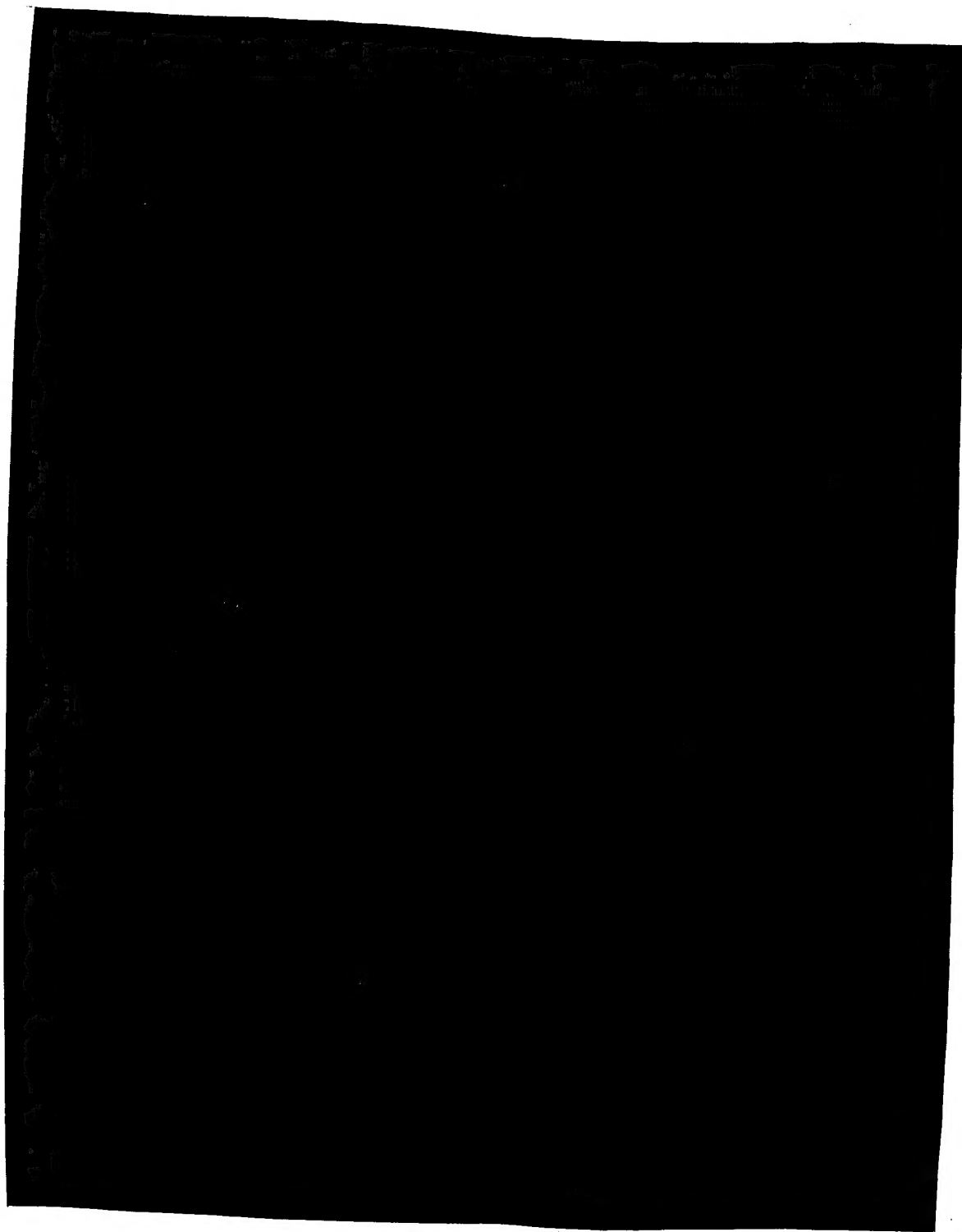
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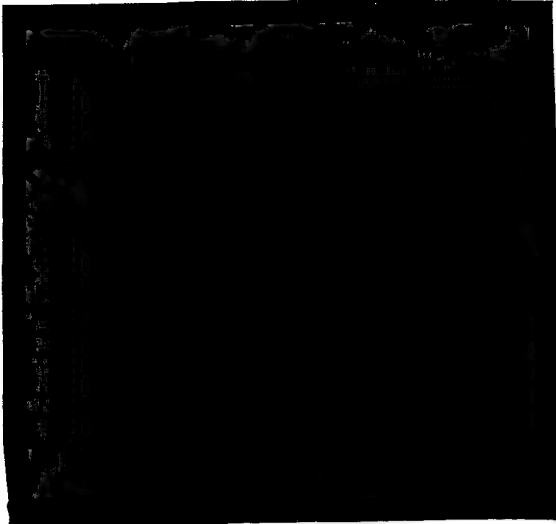
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**Sunnis Look for Help**

We believe Sunni attacks against the Syrians are intended primarily as acts of revenge against Damascus for the destruction of the Islamic Unification Movement in Tripoli. The Sunni militants probably hope the attacks will rally the support of the Sunni community and help them reinvigorate their organization in northern Lebanon. [REDACTED]

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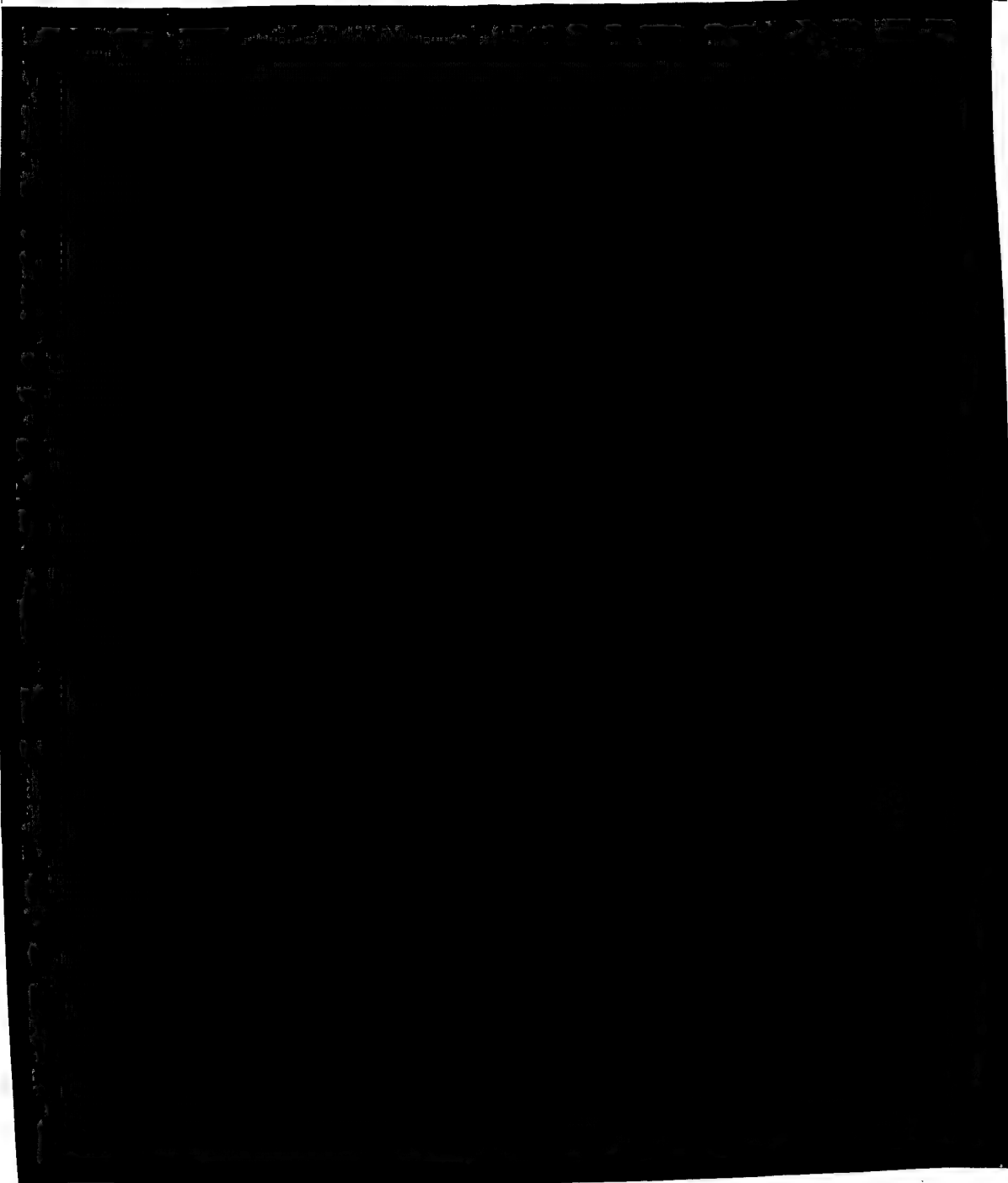
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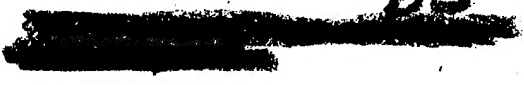
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more than hit-and-run attacks against Syrian forces highlights the dim prospects for a Sunni political revival. In our view, anti-Syrian Sunni militancy will remain a vexation to Damascus but will not develop into an important military force, the necessary prerequisite for political power in Lebanon. Moreover, the fundamentalists will have difficulty enlarging their base of support as the majority of Lebanese Sunnis outside Tripoli are not prone to religious extremism. Damascus will continue to deal harshly with any Sunni group seeking to challenge Syria's preeminence in Lebanon. b3



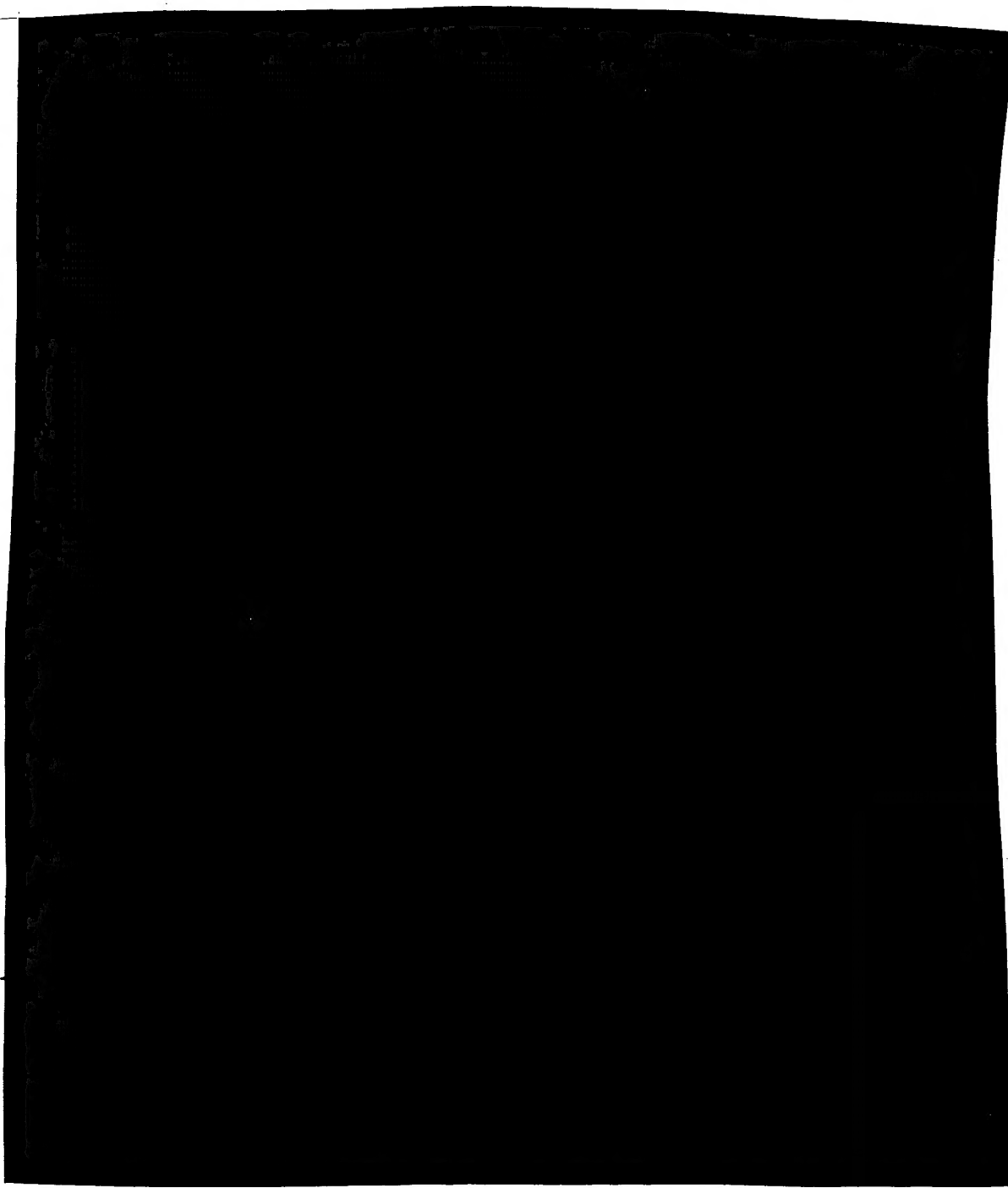
#### Outlook

We believe anti-Syrian operations in Lebanon will continue as long as the Syrian-Christian conflict is unresolved. Sunni militants will continue to look for assistance from other Lebanese actors, who are likely to give sufficient support to maintain the hit-and-run attacks but not enough to incur Syrian retaliation. The inability of the Sunni fundamentalists to conduct

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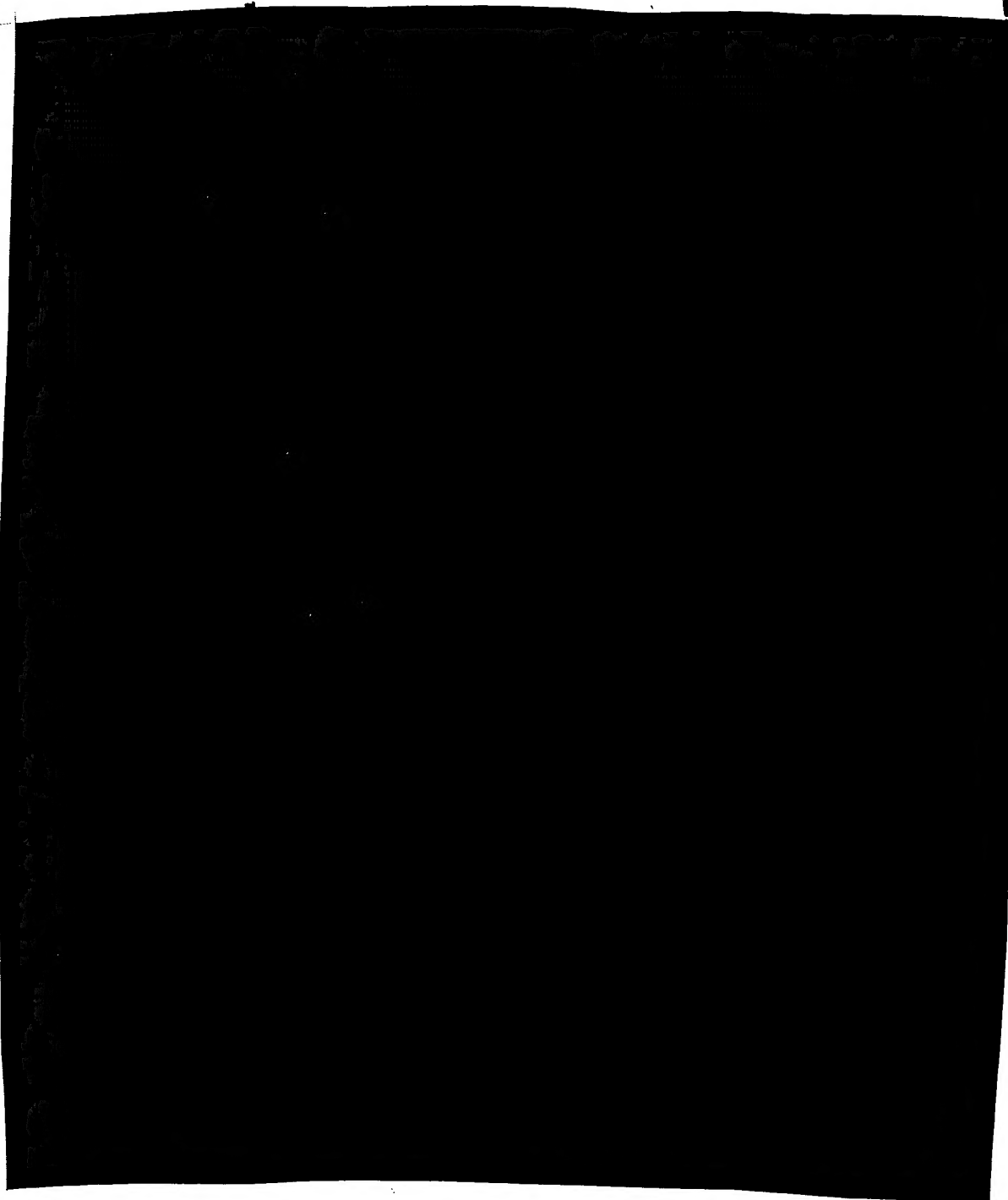
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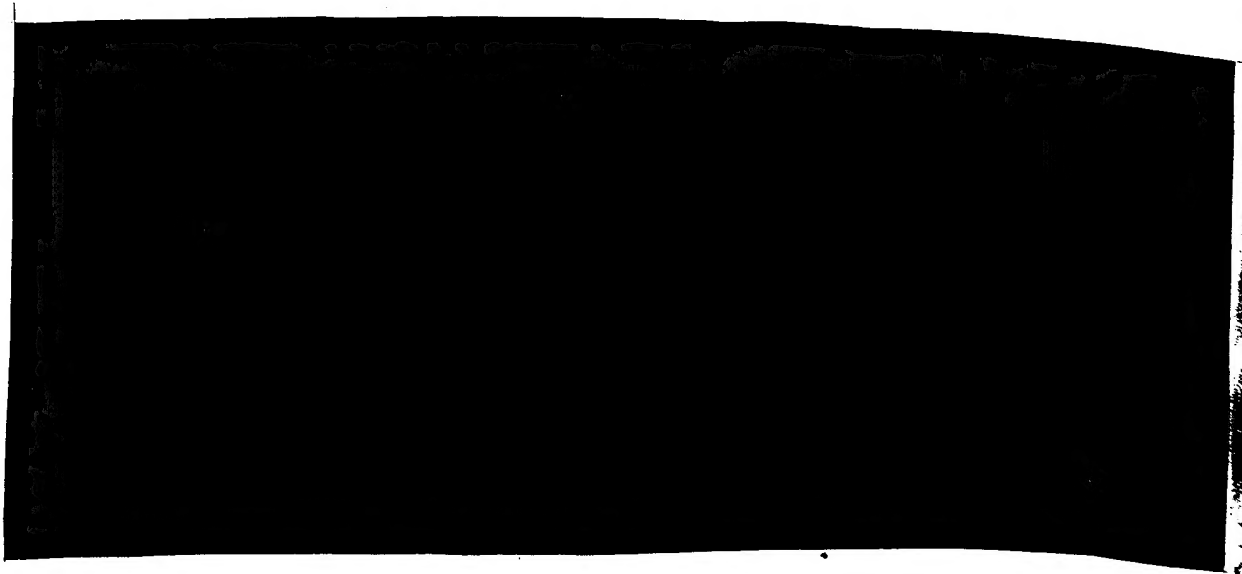


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